



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila
Fifteenth Congress
Second Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 5363

Introduced by Honorable Roger Gaviola Mercado

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Presidential Decree No. 1569 to "Strengthen the Barangay Nutrition Scholars' Program providing at least one (1) Barangay Nutrition Scholars in every barangay and providing funds therefore" was enacted in 1978. The BNSP is a strategy for providing each barangay with trained community workers to deliver basic nutrition and related health services known as the Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS). The BNS links communities with nutrition and related service providers. The program aims to address the prevailing malnutrition problems in the country. It aimed to tackle nutrition concerns, specifically at the grassroots level, by strengthening the role of the BNS in every barangay.

PD 1569 contributed to the significant reduction of malnutrition in the country. However, the proportion of malnourished children is still at an alarming level. Based on the rate of reduction in malnutrition prevalence, the Millennium Development Goal Target of halving the prevalence of underweight preschoolers has a low probability of being achieved.

Strengthening the BNS Program is seen to be an instrument to hastening the reduction of malnutrition prevalence. The BNSs plays a critical role in attaining a better nutritional status at the barangay level but over the years, their work has been challenged by threats of unsecured tenure and inadequate logistics, which has resulted to their low morale.

This bill seeks to uplift the morale of the BNS by providing for security of tenure regardless of political affiliation and benefits not provided in PD 1569 such as a second grade civil service eligibility, thus a chance to be hired to a permanent position in the local government, monthly allowance of at least Two Thousand Pesos (P2,000.00) and monthly hazard pay of One hundred Twenty Pesos (P120.00) health insurance, and scholarship grant.

Approval of this bill is therefore most earnestly urged.


ROGER GAVIOLA MERCADO



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AN ACT CREATING THE MAGNA CARTA OF BARANGAY NUTRITION SCHOLARS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SEC 1. Title – This Act shall be known as the “*Magna Carta of Barangay Nutrition Scholars*”.

SEC 2. Declaration of the Policy. – *The State shall adopt the Barangay Nutrition Scholar (BNS) Program as a human resource development strategy of the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition*, which involves the training, deployment and supervision of volunteer workers called the barangay nutrition scholars (BNS). This strategy was mandated with the promulgation of Presidential Decree No. 1569 on 11 July 1978, which requires the deployment of one (1) BNS in every barangay and for the National Nutrition Council (NNC) to administer the program in cooperation with local government units (LGUs)

SEC 3. Definition and Qualification. – For the purpose of this Bill, “Barangay Nutrition Scholar/s” shall mean a trained community worker who links the community with service providers, with the following qualifications:

1. Bonafide resident of the Barangay for at least one (1) year, with ability to speak the dialect;
2. Possession of leadership potentials and the initiative and willingness to serve the Barangay for at least one (1) year;
3. Willingness to learn, and to teach what he/she has learned to the Barangay people;
4. At least high school graduate;
5. Physical and mental fitness; and
6. At least eighteen (18) years old but not more than sixty (60) years old.

SEC 4. *Number of Barangay Nutrition Scholar/s.* – There should be at least one (1) BNS in every barangay in the country.

SEC 5. *Security of Tenure/Accreditation/Registration* – After undergoing training provided in Section 7 hereof, the BNS shall serve for at least three (3) years with yearly evaluation, by an evaluation team created for the purpose, and after which he/she will be given a permanent position in the barangay, after obtaining a satisfactory rating for 2 consecutive years.

The BNS should be a member of the BNS federation duly registered with the government, and thereby accredited by the NNC.

SEC 6. *Discrimination.* – The BNS should not in any way be discriminated on the basis of sex, race and political affiliation.

SEC 7. *Basic Tasks.* – The Barangay Nutrition Scholar/s shall perform the following basic tasks:

1. *Organize or re-organize the Barangay Nutrition Committee (BNC)*
 - a. Assist the barangay captain in organizing or reactivating the BNC and the barangay network; and
 - b. Assist the barangay captain in training purok leaders to assist the BNS
2. *Caring for the malnourished...* The BNS identifies, locates underweight children through a community survey. This survey involves weighing all preschoolers and interviewing mothers to determine how the child is cared for, and the resources available in the family for their participation in nutrition and related interventions.

Based on the results of the annual weighing, the BNS weighs monthly all underweight and severely underweight preschoolers. The BNS also weighs all 0-24 month-old children to monitor their growth which is most critical at this stage. The BNS also does a quarterly follow-up weighing of children, 25-71 months old, to the extent possible.

The regular weighing provides the basis for corrective actions which may include referral to the appropriate service or implementation of nutrition projects, together with the community.

3. *mobilizing the community...* The BNS also moves the community to organize into networks of 20-25 households, or into community-based organization working for the improvement of their nutrition situation.
4. *Linkage-building...* In the presence of other barangay-based development workers, the BNS may not necessarily deliver direct nutrition services to the community but serve as linkage-builder, to ensure that members of the community, especially those with underweight children, avail of nutrition and related services. The BNS must be aware of the services available and of those who need these services, and establish a system through which those needing certain services are referred to the appropriate service provider.
5. *other forms of assistance...* The BNS assists in delivering nutrition and related services which include:
 - a. Organizing mother's class or community nutrition education
 - b. Providing nutrition counseling services, especially on exclusive breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding, through home visits
 - c. Managing community-based feeding programs under the
 - d. Distributing seeds, seedlings, and small animals from the local agriculture office and other government organizations and non-government organizations to promote home or community food gardens, and
 - e. Informing the community on scheduled immunization and other health activities but always together with the local midwife, agriculture officer, social welfare officer, and other workers.
6. *keeping records...* To help other barangay workers and the local officials, the BNS keeps a record of the results of the regular weighing as well a record on the nutrition and health profile of families in the barangay.
7. The BNS also formulates a BNS Action Plan as guide in managing the different tasks assigned to him/her.
8. *in training...* The BNS undergoes a ten-day didactic training. The training facilitates the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for effective performance of the tasks of identifying the malnourished, monitoring the malnourished, and referring them to appropriate service providers.

After the didactic phase, the BNS undergoes a twenty-day practicum to learn how to weigh preschoolers properly and interview mothers on matters which may relate to their child-rearing practices. During this phase, the BNS collects and analyzes data on the barangay nutrition situation using the family and barangay profile forms. He or she also formulates his or her action plan.

The BNS trainer-supervisor or the district/city nutrition program coordinator (D/CNPC) organizes, conducts, and supervises the training. In the absence of the D/CNPC, the nutrition action officer (NAO) assumes these responsibilities.

9. *in continuing education...* To reinforce skills during the formal training, BNSs also attend monthly meetings. During these meetings, the D/CNPC or NAO provides more information on proper weighing and record keeping, good nutrition, breastfeeding, or other information to update their knowledge and skills. The D/CNPC or NAO visits the BNS regularly observing and encouraging the BNS to do things correctly.
10. Facilitates the formulation, ^{it} implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and coordination of the Barangay Plan of Action for Nutrition;

SEC 8. Benefits, Privileges and Incentives. - The Barangay Nutrition Scholar/s shall enjoy the following benefits, privileges and incentives but not limited to those listed below:

- a. After completing two (2) consecutive years of satisfactory service, the BNS can avail of a second grade civil service eligibility by filing the proper application with the regional office of the Civil Service Commission. This gives the BNS a chance to become a full-pledged civil servant should the BNS qualify for a vacant position in the local government;
- b. The Barangay Nutrition Worker shall be entitled to an allowance of at least Two Thousand Pesos (P2,000.00) per month. A certain amount shall be provided for building capacities of the BNS;
- c. BNSs also receive a yearly uniform allowance for the purchase of uniform t-shirt and jacket/vest, etc, from the LGU.
- d. BNSs shall also be enrolled in PhilHealth under the Indigent Program of the LGU.
- e. BNSs shall be entitled to hazard pay of One Hundred Pesos (P120.00) per month.
- f. The NNC, in coordination with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, shall formulate a scholarship program where incumbent and deserving BNSs shall be given the opportunity to avail of a scholarship grant in any institution offering two-year courses. In the case of BNS aged 50 and above, he/she has the option to assume the scholarship the grant for one of his/her daughter.

SEC 9. Code of Morality and Conduct. - While in the service, BNS should maintain good moral character and should not be involved in any crime and administrative cases, as well as any political activities, which would be grounds for dismissal.

SEC 10. Working Hours and Related Conditions. - The BNS should render at least eight (8) hours a day to deliver nutrition services, and on Saturdays and Sundays, they should be on-call as need arises.

SEC 11. Supervisory Functions/Roles of the National Nutrition Council. The NNC shall provide continuing education through trainings, and the like and give recognition based on evaluation system, and provide technical assistance to the BNS Federations to ensure their functionality.

SEC 12. Rights to Organize. - The BNSs have the right to organize but should maintain political neutrality.

SEC 13. *Rules and Regulations.* - The Department of Health in cooperation with the National Nutrition Council, National BNS Federation, Inc. and other concerned government agencies and non-government organizations, shall formulate, within one hundred eighty days (180) from its effectivity, the rules and regulation necessary to implement this Act.

SEC 14. *Budgetary Requirements.* - (to be determine during the hearing based on historical reviews.)

SEC 15. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act is declared invalid, the remainder of any provision hereof not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

SEC 16. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, executive orders, and other presidential issuances which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC 17. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen days (15) after its publication in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,